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ART. XIII. — CRITICAL NOTICES.

1. — JACOBI A VORAGINE *Legenda Aurea, vulgo Historia Lombardica dicta*. Ad Optimorum Librorum Fidem recensuit DR. TH. GRAESSE, Potentissimi Regis Saxoniae Bibliothecarius. Editio secunda. Cum approbatione, etc. Lipsiæ. pp. 957.

WE are by no means sure that those who have loved to pore over the rare old black-letter editions of this renowned work will give it a very hearty welcome when appearing in this every-day dress. We confess to a far better liking for it in its antique form. No romance of chivalry carries us farther away from the sights and sounds of our daily life, nor do we lend a more ready ear to any chronicler of the past, than when we yield ourselves to the guidance of this reverend storyteller, pass with him into that more than enchanted region of sacred fable and more sacred realities, and find ourselves awhile the companion of saints and confessors, martyrs and apostles. We would have the savor of antiquity also about our guide. The type and binding of centuries ago are only the fit garb of narratives so venerable. The modern reader, however, who is not familiar with the ancient volume, and who cares, as most of us do, more for the substance than for the form of what he learns, will be duly grateful to Dr. Graesse for having given to the world this curious work in so convenient and readable shape. Our only regret, in this regard, is that we have not yet seen the second volume, containing the promised notes and illustrations. The work admits of being illustrated by rare and curious learning; yet it hardly needs notes, so far as the meaning of the text is concerned, the style being usually simple, and the subjects seldom hard to be understood. The language, while it is, in divers respects, new to the mere classical scholar, and presents some strange things to one familiar with the earlier Latin Fathers, offers no very great difficulties to either, and will doubtless prove interesting to readers of both classes, as being no unfair specimen of mediæval Latinity. It is, as some of our readers may need to be informed, a production of the thirteenth century. Its author was a churchman of high repute in his own day, and one who fairly earned, as his memory received, the benedictions of many succeeding generations. He was a native, as the title of the book shows, of Voragine, sometimes called Vorracce, a town of the Riviera, between Savona and Genoa, — a picturesque region, fit nurse of a credulous fancy. He was made Archbishop of Genoa by Pope Nicholas IV., in 1292, and held high rank also in the then recently established

order of Dominican monks. Besides this volume of legends he wrote a History of Genoa, which may be found in Muratori, and some volumes of sermons. The speedy and world-wide celebrity this work obtained may be inferred from the fact that it is one of the first that was issued from the press after the discovery of the art of printing, — the earliest edition of it bearing date at Cologne, 1470.

The contents of the volume fully justify its rapid and extended reputation. Translated into all the principal languages of Europe, it was eagerly read by men of all classes, and gave equal delight to all. It combined the attractiveness of the simplest faith and the wildest play of imagination; the Scriptures of Truth and the Arabian Nights; the highest forms of religious thought, and the most grotesque aspects of the rudest life. When we apply to its pages the tests of historical criticism, a large part of its narrative seems no better than an idle tale. Yet if we can transfer ourselves to its author's time, we shall cease to wonder at the mighty sway it exercised for ages over belief and fancy.

To us, apart from its interest as a book of legends, this work is of much value in a psychological point of view, as showing what fed the faith and hope of so many multitudes of devout men for so many generations. It is, too, the novel of the Middle Age, the form in which its imaginative literature spontaneously shaped itself; for the whole is a native outgrowth of the popular mind, and no separate invention of De Voragine. It is also of value, as showing how legends were formed; how from some slight element of fact gradually was developed a huge congeries of fiction; how simple-minded and earnest-hearted men clung to these stories as to Gospel truth, and had their whole internal life moulded and fashioned by them.

2. — *Beati LANFRANCI Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis Opera, quæ supersunt omnia, nunc primum in Anglia e Codicibus Manuscriptis auctius et emendatius edidit J. A. GILES, LL. D., Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ Presbyter, et Coll. Corp. Chr. Oxoniensis olim Socius. Oxonii: Apud Parker necnon apud Bibliopolas omnes. 1844. 8vo. pp. 410, 314.*

THE volumes of which the title is given above are of very considerable interest for the student of history, as well as for the theologian; and we notice them at this distance from the time of their publication, because we feel well assured that they are not so well known as the peculiar character and importance of their contents should have made them. Such collections, of course, can never be popular; yet there